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F A T E ;

OR.

THE PROPHECY.

A Tragedy.

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## Dramatis Personæ.

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DUKE OF ALTENBURG.

RUPERT, his son.

MAURICE, friend to Rupert.

WALLON.

BERNARD.

DAMPIERRE.

MAXIMILIAN.

COUNT OF ELDORF.

AYMAR.

ADOLPH.

LADY CATHERINE.

CORINNA, ward to the DUKE.

MARIE.

Pages, Ladies in Waiting, Lords, Attendants, &c., &c.

SCENE—Altenburg in the early Feudal times.

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# FATE ; OR THE PROPHECY.

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## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Castle of Altenburg.*

*Enter BERNARD and DAMPIERRE.*

BER. Oh, close the scabbard of thy tongue, and peace.  
Have mercy as thou lovest me.

DAMP. No, not  
A scruple. Thou, Count Bernard, love—

BER. Why not?  
Wherefore should I not love as well as other men?  
I've wit, good graces, and good parts.

DAMP. Aye, sir,  
But love a woman such as thou hast chosen.

BER. Is she not excellent, good, virtuous,  
And gentle?

DAMP. Gentle! Mild as winter blasts,  
Soft as the wooing equinox, as full  
Of smiles as blustering March! Gentle? Why, grim  
December is a May morning to her!

BER. Wouldst have me wed a thing of smoothness?  
She's grand, and that I love. With what an air  
She moves! How waves her hand! How lifts her head!  
And on her brow there sits imperial power,  
More full of awe than flashing coronet.

Her frown's a queenly frown : I love to see  
Her frown.

DAMP. She has a far ambition,  
A will as sovereign, absolute and fixed  
As stars, o'erswaying fate itself. Her brain  
Plots subtle, selfish ends ; her blood runs dark  
With passion. Where'er she moves she rules—  
Not love to grant, but service to exact.  
Beware, I urge you, sir.

*Enter WALLON and MAXIMILIAN.*

DAMP. We give you greeting, friends.

WALL. Exchanged, we hope. Ah, Count Bernard,  
hast naught  
To rail on now, or have thy wits misused,  
In anger fled ?

DAMP. Fled hopelessly, my lord,  
For he's turned wooer.

WALL. A wooer ! Now by the young  
God's calendar of fools, I never thought  
Sir Bernard here would waste himself upon  
A sigh. How foundest time between thy cups  
To see a grace, or note an ankle ?  
Who is the maid ?

DAMP. The lady Catherine.

WALL. The lady Catherine ! Impossible !  
I'd nestle in a cloud surcharged  
With sulphurous bolts ; seek out the wilds  
Where tigers prowl, and kiss their bloody chops ;  
Leap to the arms of a death-hugging bear ;  
Do these, than live an hour in the embrace  
Of this imperious Catherine. Thou'rt mad !

BER. Laugh, gentlemen, laugh on. I know a cause  
That prospers while it may. But who comes here ?

*Enter MAURICE.*

MAU. With such becoming deference

As warrants me, I beg to know with whom I speak.

BER. With several titles  
I'm severally known. Mad Bernard o'er  
The wine-cup, Count Bernard at your service.

MAU. I am in search of one whose nearness to  
The duke could gain me hearing of his Grace.  
When gives he audience?

BER. To-day, and here.  
Count Wallon, sir, will speak in your behalf.

WALL. So I do know the matter.

MAU. Matter, sir,  
Concerning Rupert.

WALL. What, come you from him?

MAU. No, sir, nor of his knowledge, yet  
In his behalf.

WALL. Abides he near this place?

MAU. I may not tell, nor must I speak to ear  
Of any but the Duke, the import which  
I bring.

WALL. Stand by awhile, we here attend  
The Duke.

*Enter PAGE, announcing*

His Highness the Duke.

*Enter the DUKE, assisted by CORINNA; Lords, Pages, &c.  
Is led to the Ducal Chair.*

DUKE. My gentle ward, support like thine makes ago  
A joy, and blesses e'en infirmity.

COR. My dear lord.

DUKE. Gentlemen, we greet you all.  
We trust your fortunes and your healths are still  
Your friends.

WALL. We trust so too. How is your Grace?  
We sorrow, sire, to see no brighter glow  
Upon your cheek.

DUKE. The shadow of the time  
To come. For age is on us now, which knows  
No summer's glow, nor autumn's ripen'd richness.  
Decay must end and blot the fruit. Well, sirs,  
Have any special business ?

WALL. Your Grace, here waits a messenger to hold  
Some speech with you on Rupert.

DUKE. Rupert ! How !

MAU. My liege, 'tis of my lord—your son.

DUKE. Who bade  
Thee call him son of mine ? How comes it, sirs,  
This man knows not his duty ? Son ! It is  
A name these halls have not re-echoed to  
In many months. Wake not their silence, sir.  
Call him some other name.

MAU. Of Rupert, then.

DUKE. Breathes Rupert Saxon air ?

MAU. He does, your Highness.

DUKE. And seeks through you a pardon. So we think  
Your mission aims. Speak, if it be not so—  
Yet heed—No mercy can he hope until  
He kneels contrite and penit<sup>ent</sup>.

MAU. Rupert is ignorant that I am here  
In his behalf, and you, Sire, know his heart  
Too well to think he'd sue for pardon  
Offered only to his humility.

DUKE. What means this, sir ?

MAU. I do not come, your Highness,  
To beg a pardon, but to crave a justice.  
I fain would say some things to mitigate  
Your judgment, lay before you truths whose tongues  
Would plead most eloquently Rupert's cause.  
But, Sire, I represent a gentleman  
Who would not yield prerogatives of rank  
And birth—

DUKE. No rank nor birth. He hath disclaimed



Them both, and as a beggar only shall  
He be received.

MAU. 'Tis for your son,  
No beggar that I plead.

DUKE How now!

MAU. My lord  
Far better were my tongue forever dumb  
Than I should speak the things I'm here to speak,  
And only find response in scorn.  
Be merciful, my lord. Exact not more  
Than justice. Hear me, and if what I'd say  
Proves not your son unjustly cursed with your  
Displeasure, send me hence a proven liar,  
A branded braggart and a slave.

DUKE. When he  
Repents we'll hear his vindication.

MAU. Proud hearts will not repent upon compulsion.

DUKE. Proud hearts must bend to lawful power.

MAU. Wilt hear  
Me speak of him?

DUKE. When at our feet.  
Till then be silent

MAU. Shades the blacker now  
Will rest on thee, my friend. Ah, royal Sire,  
I could speak truths of him to draw a sad  
And wat'ry tribute from a wolfish heart,  
And make all inharmonious Nature one  
Concord of sadness at his woes. Farewell!

COR. Stay! stay! My lord, my dear lord, hear him speak.  
Of Rupert.

DUKE. Away! It shall not be.

MAU. Why then farewell. I thank my star I have  
No father, none whose love I'd fear to lose,  
\* hatred dread to gain.

[Exit.

DAMP. (*Aside to Bernard*) The Duke is chafed.

DUKE. How now, girl ! Pale, and tears ! What, weep-  
est thou

For this ungrateful boy ?

COR. My lord !

DUKE. Thou hast

A tell-tale face, transparent, shows each thought,  
And motion of your soul. Good gentlemen,  
Your leaves. Enjoy your leisure hence awhile.

WALL. We bow to your Grace's will.

*[Excunt all but Duke and Corinna, and pages, who  
withdraw up.]*

DUKE. You've seen Rupert,  
You've entertained his presence by your pity,  
And showing him a martyr, made yourself  
A love.

COR. Dear sire.

DUKE. I tell you there shall be  
No loving 'twixt you. He is degraded from  
His rank and birth, and now so far beneath  
Your merit as to only move your scorn.

COR. Oh ! say not this, my liege.

DUKE. Love ! Tears  
To foster, sighs to grow it in. O shame !  
But you have met in secrecy !

COR. Not since  
His sad departure from these halls have I  
Been blessed with such a joy as seeing him.

DUKE. 'Tis well. And girl, remember this—he is  
A beggar, driven from my heart—

COR. My lord, my lord, you know not what you say.  
Ah, he is loyal, good, and ready to  
Atone his fault, but that high pride which waits  
On greatest souls doth hold him back.  
I know his noble nature—know that depth  
Of gentleness which lieth near  
His inner heart, and how in secret he

Must bleed and weep because of this  
Estrangement. And still another sorrow palls  
His soul, and clouds it in a melancholy  
So sad, as might win tears from earth, and melt  
The coldest star that reigned upon his birth,  
Could they but know his evil.

DUKE. His offence  
Won tears of sorrow from a father's eye,  
Who knew his evil. Dost thou know the wrong ?  
Before the gathered lords I chid him once  
As negligent of his courtly duties, when,  
All hot and swelling grew his breath,  
And sudden leapt his passion at my words.  
With angry oaths he vowed that Wallon put  
Me to the charge, that Wallon falsely swore  
Against his peace, and's if he would divest  
His hatred, poured on him the bent and sway  
Of his unbridled fury. Wallon, stirred  
To rage, at Rupert flung some fierce reply ;  
An instant sword crossed sword ; a dozen blades  
Exampling them, ranked side 'gainst side. I rushed  
Between, beat down the bristling steel, to all  
Commanded peace, on Rupert charged the cause.  
He hotly made reply. Enraged, I struck  
Him in the breast, when he, as stirred by some  
Damned devil, grew so black and swollen as  
To burst with passion, dragged his dagger forth,  
Which flashing o'er his head, he sprang  
Upon his father. Wallon, so I think, or else  
Some other's friendly hand, struck from his grasp  
The impious blade.

COR. O grievous fault ! and yet  
I think it was not Wallon's, but his own  
Relenting hand which cast the dagger at  
Your feet.

DUKE. A parricide ! O God ! that I

Should say it, yet I feel it so. Convulsed  
With rage, I took a vow he ne'er should step  
Within these halls again.

COR. Sire, sire, revoke  
The oath—

DUKE. It must not be. I warn thee girl  
Beware his love. When from thy father I  
Received thee, bade thee call *me* father, then  
I breathed a hope to see thee Rupert's bride.  
But now the pledge I gave thy dying sire  
Forbids the thought. Corinna, thou must wed  
In high estate. We'll find a lover for  
Thee—Wallon? noble, rich, young! What would more?  
Well, well, we'll talk of this anon. But mark,  
Beware of Rupert. Heaven's heavy hand  
Is on him. Beware!

*[Exit Duke, followed by pages.]*

COR. How chill the omen sounds!  
Benignant powers, restore this erring son  
Unto the self-willed father! Oh, could tears  
Like these I shed, reach up to heaven, thence  
Rained down in peace upon their heads, I'd wear  
My cheeks in furrows. Rupert, thou art still  
The worship of my heart. To thee I kneel  
In light or darkness—clouded, clouded now!  
All storm and not a star!

## SCENE II.—*Another part of the Castle.*

*Enter CATHERINE and BERNARD.*

CATH. A messenger from Rupert? Saw you him?

BER. I did, my lady.

CATH. Whence came he? Is he still  
About the court?

BER. I dare be sworn he is.

CATH. To him at once, and bid him seek me here.

BER. I fly, my dear—my own—

CATH. No fondness, sir!

[*Exit Bernard.*]

*Enter WALLON.*

CATH. Ah, Wallon, know you aught of Rupert?

WALL. This person's message was to none made known.  
He did solicit of the Duke some speech,  
Which was, as I think, rightfully denied.

CATH. Thou think'st so! And why, Count Wallon, why?  
Wouldst bar access of blood to blood,  
Dissever roughly all close links of kin?  
Thou art a wise man, one severely schooled  
In nature; thou dost know the human heart—  
Canst thou read mine?

WALL. I'm dumb to understand  
Your ladyship.

CATH. I thought as much.  
Yet I have scanned and studied yours,  
And seen the motive lying deepest at  
The core. I know the hope you cherish—where  
You aim. You dream, aspire, in secret hug  
Ambition. I have watched you—read your soul.  
I know who 'twas who set the Duke against  
His son—who fed the father's hate—who schemed  
With Judas subtlety to cool their loves,  
Inventing faults, misstating facts,  
And puffing up each idle breath of scandal  
To gales of calumny.

WALL. Why, lady—

CATH. Rupert is banished! Are you not the Duke's  
Adviser—his nearest friend—would not a word  
From you bring back *the heir*—the heir, whose place  
You poise to spring upon?

WALL. I cannot follow you—see not your aim.  
'Twere treachery—

CATH. 'Tis treachery !

WAL. To serve

My master simply to his good ? It is  
A kind of treachery the Duke applauds,  
Rupert is mad—

CATH. Ah, there's thy source of hope—  
On that thou feedest.

*Enter BERNARD and MAURICE.*

I'll confer with thee anon.

*[Aside to Wall.*

Count Wallon, I have business with

This gentleman alone. I pray your leaves.

*[Exeunt Bernard and Wallon.*

You come from Rupert ? Where abides he, sir ?

MAU. I cannot answer till I know his good  
Or ill, the knowledge bodes.

CATH. 'Tis good.

MAU. I think

You mean him well.

CATH. I swear it. Holds  
He easy reach ?

MAU. A two hours ride.

CATH. In which  
Direction must I bend ?

MAU. The road  
Which southern leads, and short from this within  
A forest's murky shade is buried. There,  
Alone and silent paces he the turf,  
Feeding melancholy with dark thoughts  
And woeful meditation.

CATH. Couldst not lead  
Me to him ?

MAU. Yes.

CATH. Why then to horse with speed.

*[Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*A Wood.**Enter RUPERT and ADOLPHE.*

RUP. Why do you follow me? I have a love  
Of solitude—the presence of aught  
Annoys me.

ADO. Solitude, sire, feeds despair.

RUP. And should do so till it to bursting grows.

ADO. But—

RUP. I must, sir, be obeyed. *[Exit Adolphe.*

I could

Not have a human thing to stand between  
My soul and the majestic solemnity  
Of this pervading solitude. Oh, when  
My heart was young—old now in weariness—  
I often wandered here, amidst these trees,  
Hoary in age, that grandly interlace  
Their lofty tops, and hang their mossy banners  
Pendant to the breeze. Oh, could I re-act  
Those days! These trunks were my companions then—  
I loved their shades. How often have I heard  
Them fretted into fitful music by  
The passing gale! how often seen them bowed  
By wild tornado's breath! and then how leapt  
My eager blood in the fierce charm  
Of warring elements; how flushed my brow  
And blazed my eye, as round  
In thund'ring echoes fell the forest sires,  
Or gleamed the lightning's flash thro' vista'd darkness!  
Oh, scene of grandeur—Maurice! What is this?

*Enter MAURICE and CATHERINE.*

CATH. Why, Cousin Rupert!

RUP. Lady Catherine. *[Exit Maurice]*

CATH. Nay, do not start. I came to do no wrong.

RUP. I crave your pardon, but you're kinswoman  
To my father.

CAT. Does that a wrong  
Necessitate?

RUP. Oh, likely! It's a taint  
Of blood. This Saxon air breeds it.

CATH. You do  
Injustice, Rupert, both to me and yourself.

RUP. That's what I inherit. If I were not unjust  
The world would justly think me bastard.  
But pardon me. I'll not disturb your walk.  
Farewell.

CATH. Rupert, come back. Is this the best  
Of greeting you can give me?

RUP. Art my friend?

CATH. Sincerely so.

RUP. How prove it?

CATH. Prove it, Rupert?  
By bringing back your youth to Altenburg.

RUP. What would my father say to that—what those  
Who sat on my disgrace?  
You mock me, lady.

CATH. I do not, Rupert; I fain would see thy rights  
Restored, and if by me thou wilt be guided,  
They shall be so.

RUP. What would you have me do?

CATH. Seek out occasion, stand before your sire,  
Excuse the fault of which you stand approved,  
And to the throat demand the proof of those  
Invented lies, so closely breathed about  
The court. Do this, and justice shalt thou win.

RUP. I do not wish to force myself into  
My rights. I have a weariness of storm  
And struggle ill comporting such an aim.

CATH. O, sick despair! Are you so weak in this  
Despondency? Lies there no greater strength



Beneath your gloom? Brace up your soul with your  
Adversity, and gather up a rage  
To top these fell-created bars against  
Your peace. Strong will, my cousin, monarchs all :  
'Tis more than gates, or walls. Who has it, he  
Is master. Thou art such a one. 'Tis wed  
To thee, but lies unlaced and housed. Arouse,  
And Fate itself shall come sit on your shoulders.

RUP. There is a *something* here I would not stir  
To gain the sovereignty of worlds. While yet  
In peace it lies a dormant blackness,  
If ruffled by a breath, I raise a storm  
Of terror to myself.

CATH. I understand  
Not this.

RUP. A shadow crammed with horrors, destiny  
Foreshown more terrible than death or hell—  
A spirit lying darkly watchful,  
Which springing unaware would shut out heaven  
Forever more. Know'st thou how died my mother?

CATH. I've heard 'twas strange and unaccountable.

RUP. I have unveiled the mystery. She died  
A maniac.

CATH. And dost thou then conclude—

RUP. Aye, that which stood beside her dying bed  
Peers ever o'er my shoulder, shadows all  
My days, and palls my soul in beamless night.  
It is a spectre, hovering before,  
With noiseless pace forever at my side,  
Or stealthily treading in my steps behind,  
Pursuing, pointing, chattering  
With horrid glee.

CATH. Oh, dotage in sadness!  
I thought you, coz, of better stuff. Your high  
Promise of youth is slipped into a dream—  
You beggar spirit but to throttle this

Fantastic humor. Out upon thee, Coz,  
For trembling at a thing intangible.

RUP. Upon this very spot, three years ago,  
I met a sibyl, aged and wise, who knew  
My mother. She prophetic spoke what my  
Inspired heart already knew, for there  
Had been wild stirrings in my breast  
And sudden motions of my blood to rage  
And terror, unaccounted, causeless and  
Beyond control. But when this fear became  
Confirmed, when prophecy gave form to what  
Was only vague and shadowy before—  
Oh God, I pray thou'lt never know an hour  
Like that! I clasped my hands upon my brow  
And frantic fled, I knew not where—to dark  
Untrodden solitudes, where to the air  
I poured my grief in passionate words.

CATH. Cousin! Rupert!

RUP. Oh go, I pray thee go.  
These thoughts will frenzy me. Yet stay, upon  
One matter let me question thee.  
How fares my father's ward, Corinna?

CATH. Corinna!

RUP. I fain would see her, Catherine.  
Wilt thou convey as much? To-morrow, here  
I'll wait. She knows the spot. It's by the oak  
Where often we have prattled low talk.  
Its huge limbs shooting low, enclose a shade  
Sacred to love. Farewell, and serve me thus.

[*Exit Rupert*]

CATH. Corinna! Corinna! spoke he of her?  
It cannot be—he loves not her, and yet  
He coupled love with her. If so, why she  
Would prosper with him back to court—not I!  
Then let him famish here in banishment!  
The smooth, lip-whining, meek-mouthed girl!

Can Rupert love a thing like this—a thing  
Like this cross me in that I pant to reach ?  
By will, high purpose, wit of woman, no !  
This fancy well possesses him. His wit  
Is weak—I could remove his fear—it shall  
Blow on, and top, and top, a frowning crest  
Between their love, which neither dares to scale.  
Their love ! Not ambition only pricks me on—  
My heart surrendered worship to the fire  
Which blazed Promethean in his eye, when first  
We met—two children then. He seemed a god.  
All struck, I crawled abashed and kissed his hand.  
Since then I have upreached. Ambition—love—  
Two passions fuse within my breast, by which  
I will attain  
The bright and glorious height I've sworn to gain.

END OF ACT. I.

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Castle.*

*Enter CORINNA and MAURICE.*

COR. Condemn my idle questions not. I am  
Not wise to speak so freely of my lord,  
But I would learn e'en by the figure of  
Your speech, his portraiture, and trace in words  
His sad, low-seeking eye, his sorrowed brow,  
And lip of woe.

MAU. Wouldst read the open page,  
And not decipher figures, merely?

COR. You,  
Sir, speak in characters now.

MAU. What! has not  
The lady Catherine conveyed to you  
His message?

COR. No!

MAU. This answers then the cause  
Of your not coming, which to Rupert seemed  
A grievous fault.

COR. I knew not he was near.

MAU. Within the wood, and by the very spot  
Where last you met, for now two days, from dawn's  
Refulgent glow till night's enclosing shade,  
Hath he impatient waited thee.

COR. Oh, fly,  
And say I'll meet him ere another morn  
Can blush for my delay!

MAU. I go, sweet lady.  
Fail not, for he hath passionate yearning  
Once more to see thee.

*[Exit Maurice.]*

COR. Shall I see my lord  
So soon? My joy o'er-gushes into words;  
I feel the rapturous music of his voice  
Upon my heart; his eyes to which I own  
A worship like unto the stars, are fixed  
On me; his smile, the rainbow of his love,  
That promiseth devotion, beams upon  
Me now as oft it hath.

*Enter LADY CATHERINE.*

CATH. Corinna, was't  
Not Maurice that I met from you returning?

COR. 'Twas indeed. Oh, lady, thou so oft  
Hath proved my friend, help me to joy, for I  
Have heard a music tone seraphic choirs  
Could never catch.

CATH. Came it from Rupert?

COR. Yes,  
Oh, Yes!

CATH. Corinna, how is't thou hast not  
In our conferring ever said the heir  
Of Altenburg did lift his eyes to thee?

COR. I scarcely know, unless his name so much  
The treasure of my heart, I did not dare  
Unfold its richness.

CATH. So you love the Prince.  
Your climbing fancy reaches to the crown.

COR. Lady!

CATH. Oh, have done with innocence, and all  
Its tricks, and starts, and looks of injured trust;  
They're stale—played out.

COR. Sweet lady!

CATH. The Duke  
Will thank your fine humility. His ward—  
His beggar ward, aspires to Rupert—to  
The crown!

COR. Aspire ? His love uplifted me.  
I shunned the light ; he bade me raise my eyes.

CATH. To worship, not to love. Thou may'st not wed  
To greatness such as his. Shall his high soul,  
Ordained to soar where lofty aspiration  
Grasps at wonder-living fame,  
Bear on its course the fledglet that could ne'er  
The bracing air of loftiness respire ?  
A soul of Rupert's grandeur must not link  
Itself to one in poverty of spirit.

COR. What means my friend ?

CATH. In winning Rupert's love  
Thou win'st my hate.

COR. 'Tis sure no crime to love  
Where we adore.

CATH. Thy adoration ! He  
Could pluck down worship from the stars, and wreath  
The sunlight to a halo for his head !  
Thy adoration ! Lowly things adore  
By instinct—love by presumption.

COR. I know not why you task me that I love.  
If what I spoke offends, I sorrow that  
I spoke, but breathed upon the widest air,  
Or whispered only in low prayers,  
That love is still my hope—it's very strength  
Drawn from the weakness that you scorn.

CATH. Do you  
Confess this love ?

COR. You drew it forth. My words  
Do not belie my heart.

CATH. They do. Thou love—  
By all a woman's rage thou shalt not love !

COR. He bade me love. To wed, I have not dared  
To hope—to love, that is my own ; it grew  
A part of me ; my heart and love became  
Inseparate ; they live and die together—it may be

Unblessed, still richly treasured. Throned within,  
No human will can reft my love away.

CATH. The will to do whate'er my heart doth prompt,  
The firm, unmoved, o'erruling will, that would  
Not own the sway of stars, nor yield unto  
A power though backed by dark  
And magic mystery, why such a will  
Shall bar thee from his arms forever. Earth  
Up piled upon thy breast the sooner shall  
Enfold thee in an everlasting sleep,  
Than thou live but an hour with Rupert.

COR. Ah me, how quick the gushings of my heart  
Are frozen up! Dost thou love Rupert?

CATH. I—(*a pause.*) I am his cousin—  
My hopes aspire for him—would see  
Him nobly mated. Bernard here!

*Enter BERNARD.*

BER. Dear lady, look more kindly. Love—

CATH. Canst thou  
Not see my humor? I'm not pleased.

BER. In truth  
You rarely are.

COR. (*aside.*) This latest fear doth urge  
Me to my lord. I'll haste to Rupert's side,  
And from his vows new learn my faith in him.

[*Exit Corinna.*

CATH. The wench! I was a fool. I said too much.

BER. Why love, but little hast thou said.

CATH. She will unfold what I have said. The wench,  
The puny wench! To shade the sun from me—  
O fool, why do you follow me? I'm vexed.

BER. Give me to know the cause and I'll revenge  
Thy wrongs.

CATH. Why thou'rt the cause. Thou dost not please.  
The man I entertain, must suit his tongue,

Presence, and tone, unto my humor ; wait  
 Demure upon my fancy ; fly, when I  
 Command, and breathless back again to learn  
 His further service ; clip his speech to joy  
 Or sadness as I please. If I extend  
 My fingers, think their kissing were a boon—  
 Nay, catch the crumbs of fondness I may shake  
 To him, and thank his fortune for as much.

BER. And so do I, divinest creature.

CATH. (*quickly.*) Wilt  
 Thou serve me as I wish ?

*Enter, behind, WALLON, DAMPIERRE and MAXIMILIAN.*

BER. Here let me swear.

All fire is ice, all suns are limpid shades,  
 To that fierce heat with which my heart doth burn.—

CATH. Rehearse thy speech alone. If it be learned  
 I'll hear thee speak it o'er another time.

[*Exit Catherine.*

BER. What gone ! Alone !

*Wallon, Dampierre and Maximilian advancing laughing.*

DAM. Oho, my gentle love.

MAX. Why thou Lazarus, feeding upon the crumbs of  
 fondness.

DAMP. Go send your beard to the charge of a barber,  
 and hang yourself in petticoats.

MAX. "All fire is ice, all suns are shades." Ha, ha, ha !

DAMP. You lackey of Cupid, trencher-Cupid.

MAX. Hath he not a poodle look ?

DAMP. Oh, born for a pink ribbon.

MAX. Come, my valiant lover, speak your speech, or else  
 your gentle maid returning, finding you not delivered, your  
 ears will suffer, i' faith they will.

DAMP. Ought not Apollo grow asses' ears from his  
 brow, like another Midas ? They would grace him marvel-  
 lously.



WALL. An ass in love! I wouldn't have Cupid enter into an ass's gravity for he would starve on such feeding.

MAX. But here Cupid entered into a wit and the issue was an ass. I believe his love is a bastard love. It never was begotten of Cupid.

BER. By heaven, gentlemen, your swords. (*draws.*) Let us see if they be as keen as your tongues.

WALL. For shame Bernard! Put up your blade, and wear your bravery where it behoves you. Do not bluster before us while you show a soul so full of cravenness to your mistress.

DAMP. If you can sit like a bird on your mistress's finger and hop only so far as her cord will let you, go perch there again, break your sword, and bury your spurs.

BER. By Jupiter you're right! I have been an ass indeed. I will no more of it. She shall not serve me so henceforth. I'll put on authority. She shall see I'm not the patient fool she takes me for.

WALL. Here comes the lady returning.

DAMP. Now man assume thy rights—put off livery.

BER. (*looking off*) Think you she looks not frowningly?  
I'm bold

To meet her now, but yet methinks 'twere wise  
And merciful to take her when she's in  
A milder vein. I'll brave her when she is  
Alone. Trust me, I will, i'faith I will.

DAMP. Where goest thou noble Bernard? Dost  
Not see thy love? Salute her!

BER. No, not for  
The world. And I indignant and salute?  
Not for the world. [*Exit Bernard. All laughing.*]

*Enter CATHERINE.*

CATH. Good gentlemen—

WALL. A pardon from your ladyship. Our rude  
Behavior is put on from merriment,  
And bears no malice.

CATH. Gentlemen, I trust  
You'll pardon me, but I have business  
With Count Wallon.

DAMP. Adieu, my lady.

[*Exit Dampierre and Maximilian.*]

CATH. My lord, I once confessed to you I knew  
Your aim—

WALL. Madam, you do.

CATH. Oh, pray, sir Count,  
Put off this seeming good. I know your hope ;  
The coronet, which may from Rupert's head  
Be easily secured, thou'dst have to grace  
Thine own. Lend me your aid in that I wish—  
It shall be yours.

WALL. What good to thee enforced  
Shall bring this consummation ?

CATH. I wish revenge.  
Why, do not ask ! I have been wronged ; let that  
Suffice. Help me to that revenge, and I  
Will aid thee to the crown.

WALL. That way, I do  
Confess, my hopes have looked. Young Rupert's mad,  
Or hovers on the verge of madness. He  
Must never rule. There's not a sword which would  
Not leap to bar succession 'gainst a soul  
So stamped and cursed as his. The Duke  
Is dying fast, and yet named no successor.  
If that successorship fall but to me,  
Or still the nomination be, as now,  
Unfilled, on either chance my hope is good.

CATH. Most good, and if the Duke so dies, intestate,  
And thou adventure for the crown, thou hast  
My aid. My voice with many gentlemen  
Would gain thee champions, and my brother Eldorf  
With liberal force should take the field with thee.  
But, Wallon, mark ; the Duke *does* think on the

Succession. He hath a ward, Corinna ;  
He loves her much, and holds thee closely to  
His heart. Corinna's husband, would—dost mark?  
Would stand in estimation of his love  
Almost a son. Dost understand ?

WALL. You mean—

CATH. Marry Corinna—claim her hand.  
'Twould be the nearest road to that you wish.

WALL. By Jove ! 'tis likely.

CATH. Day succeeding night  
Is not more sure, and chance plays wanton to  
Your purpose. *She* in the forest to-night  
Encounters Rupert secretly.

WALL. So near ?

CATH. There is a puny, sickly flame between  
Them which I would extinguish. Strategy  
Or force—some cunning needs to wait upon  
Your plans. Tear them apart. The moon will veil  
Her face to shut their dalliance out, but you,  
With clamor of your tongue, shall fright them from  
Their hot embraces. Let them never meet  
Again. 'Tis thus thou givest me revenge.

WALL. Does Rupert love—

CATH. What matters ? He's disgraced—  
The Duke himself would reft the girl from him.  
There is an abbey near, deserted, save by one  
Old priest. Convey Corinna there. The Duke  
Will rave to learn that she clandestinely  
Saw Rupert, will desire to cleanse the stain,  
And gladly marry her. With his consent  
Go armed to her. She may resist. The night  
And secrecy will hide what force you use.  
Meanwhile I'll whisper in the Ducal ear  
Thy name as his successor.  
If given, well; if not, thy marriage to  
Corinna, kin to his blood, would

Give color to thy aim. And this, besides,  
I promise thee a thousand knights, with thrice  
That number followers, to join  
Thy banner when unfurled.

WALL. It shall be done.  
This night shall separate the girl from him  
Forever.

CATH. So lives my revenge. Do this,  
And let thy dreams aspire. [*Exeunt separately.*]

SCENE II.—*A wood. Moonlight.*

*Enter RUPERT and MAURICE.*

RUP. She does not come. There was a little joy  
Within my heart, but this forsaking now  
Hath pierced it quite. The worship of  
My love had reared an idol where I knelt,  
But now, alas! this stern iconoclast,  
My destiny, hath broken up the image.  
She too is nothing.

MAU. Sir, you do her wrong.  
I marked a paleness and a sadness on  
Her brow, and unaware a sigh,  
As from a heart o'erladen, broke with low  
And tearful lamentation from her lips;  
And when I spake of you, as through a dark  
And rifted cloud the sun will break, so lit  
With sudden light her drooping eye, and o'er  
The paleness of her cheek there came and went  
Quick orient flushes, such as those we see  
Dappling a summer morn.

RUP. Pale, say you, pale?  
She once was rich in blooming rosiness,  
Dewey like flowers at the matin hour,  
Full to the brim with exulting life,  
Aglow with nectar'd health.

*Enter CORINNA, hurriedly.*

COR. My lord,  
Oh, Rupert—

RUP. Corinna !

COR. Rupert, dear my lord,  
I am pursued.

RUP. Pursued ! What means this fear ?

COR. I heard the distant tramp of armed men,  
And torches through the forest gleamed afar,  
While figures moved between the lights and me.  
Some mischief's planned against thy peace.

RUP. Good Maurice, look to this. Set watch. There is

*[Exit Maurice.]*

No danger, love. Oh, heaven, do I fold  
Thee to my breast again ! Forever live  
Upon my heart, and stay its breaking.  
Close, close, for peace is on me now.

COR. Rupert !

RUP. Corinna, let me look on thee, for this  
Doth seem a blessing that e'en with the gaze  
Must all away again. Oh, I have longed  
To know this hour.

COR. Thou'rt sadly altered, love.  
The moon's pale light reveals thy cheek's wan shade ;  
Thy tones are very sad ; thine eye looks full  
Of soundless woe. Rupert, thou hast suffered much.

RUP. Corinna, oh, Corinna ! *[Weeps.]*

COR. Rupert !

RUP. I never wept before.

COR. This grief of thine  
Possesses me. But oh, cast off the shade ;  
It is but fancy which thy banishment  
And gloomy solitude create.

RUP. Think not

So much of it. Thy presence mellowed this  
Despair, and softened it to tears.

COR. Dear Rupert,  
My tears with thine will move our heaven's love  
To pass this fate from thee. Be not cast down.  
Oh, there is hope.

RUP. Thy smile is now its dawn !  
But ah, you do not know how sterile, wild  
And desert-like hath been my heart, to which  
No thing in nature bears a seeming. I  
Remember standing once upon a heath  
Where not a living thing abided ; rocks  
Whose barren sides no mossy softness bore ;  
No nature's velvet on the sodden turf ;  
No flowers exhaling sweetness on the air ;  
Extending waste and deathful gloom alone ;  
Some blasted, riven trees stood here and there—  
Gaunt, withered shafts that whitened with decay,  
With but a branch or two still clinging to  
Their ravaged sides, whose tortured shapes did seem  
Grim spirits of Desolation watching o'er  
Their wild domain. 'Twas night and deep black clouds  
Lay piled in masses o'er the sky, save where  
A star or two looked out to show the scene.  
As I amidst this wildness stood, my brow  
Unto the heavens bared, I thanked my fate  
There was one spot to which my soul  
In sympathy could cling. But suddenly,  
Through blackened rents and ragged drifts of clouds  
The moon broke forth, and laid her soothing hand  
Upon the wilderness, and lo ! 'twas bright  
And fair—Then, then I fled, for Nature in  
Her darkest mood was still beneath the smile  
Of Heaven—*I alone was not !*

COR. You think.  
Of this too deeply, love.

*Enter MAURICE.*

RUP. Maurice !

MAU. Away !

An armed body bend their steps to this.

RUP. Their purpose ? Can you tell ?

MAU. I know not sure,

But once I drew so near I caught some hint

As to their aim, which was upon this lady.

COR. On me ?

MAU. They come, sir, rapidly. Withdraw,

Dear Prince, thy safety only is in flight.

RUP. Is Wallon there ?

MAU. I think he leads.

RUP. There is

Some plan in this to do me wrong, but which

I do not clearly see.

MAU. Dear sir, away.

RUP. I must confront this man.

MAU. To do it now

Were madness. Sir, remember, if he aims

Upon this maid all time could not repair

The wounds this night inflicts. Corinna is

In danger. Save her.

COR. Rupert, love, be ruled

By him.

RUP. Thy safety, love, is all the world.

I will avoid him now, and yet I pant

To bare my blade against his breast. But come,

Corinna, come.

*[Exeunt Rupert and Corinna.]*

MAU. A little braving now

To give them time.

*Enter WALLON followed by Soldiers, Retainers, with torches, &c.*

WALL. What's this ? Oho, our man  
Of eloquence ! Where's thy master ?

MAU. If

You mean your young Prince Rupert, he's not here.

WALL. Look you, give not your tongue to sauciness,  
Or I will carve it with my sword. Aside,  
That we may pass to hunt the forest farther.

MAU. I like this spot, I do not care to move.

WALL. By Jove, I'll cut a channel through thy flesh  
If for a moment thou dost bar my course.

MAU. I lean against this tree. It rests me well ;  
Pass on above, below, on either side—  
Here, gentlemen, I choose to stand.

WALL. Upon  
Thee then. I'll carve a way.

*[Passes at Maurice, who suddenly draws and  
after a pass or two disarms him.]*

MAU. First learn some better fence. You all,  
Who stand there staring by like women, I  
Will try your mettle—Come at once.

WALL. Upon  
Him. Cut him down.

*[They rush upon Maurice, who retreats off  
the stage, defending himself, followed by all.]*

*Re-enter MAURICE.*

MAU. Poor fools, pursue the shadows ; they will lead  
A glorious chase. Thy torches light  
Thy folly, not thine enemy. But I  
Must follow closely on their track lest they  
O'ertake the birds they hunt.

*Enter RUPERT, hurriedly.*

RUP. Maurice ! Maurice !

MAU. My Prince ! where is Corinna ?

RUP. Dragged—O God  
That it should be—dragged from my side. Call help !  
Arouse the country ! Rescue, Maurice, rescue !



Divided parties rear and front, each one  
Of twenty blades did suddenly enclose  
Our path. Their swords clashed thickly round, they  
    pressed

On ev'ry side. I clove them down; my sword  
Ran dripping with their blood. But suddenly  
Corinna's hold was loosened from my hand;  
A dozen foes came in between us; wild  
With rage I threw my weight upon them—they  
Gave way; but like a gleam I saw  
Corinna vanish in the darkness; then  
I was alone. Each figure glided off,  
And left me only impotent dismay.

MAU. I held at bay one group, another fell  
On you. What can we do?—

RUP. What do? But this!  
Unto the castle—brave them there. I've borne  
Enough of evil, now for some revenge.  
Each drop of blood is fiery spur to action!  
I'll face my father, dare the most his spite  
Can do, and either gain redress or death.

MAU. Alas! a storm is gath'ring round.

RUP. I'll top  
The billow though it roll to heaven! To  
The castle! Come.

END OF ACT II.

## ACT III.

SCENE I.—*An Ante-chamber.**Enter* BERNARD.

BER. There never was a woman like to her.  
She doth out-parallel her riddle sex ;  
I never met with such a thing as she.  
There was no use in my passion, for  
She only laughed to hear me rail. I swore I should  
Be master of herself, and not her slave.  
I vowed I would be stern, severe, and to  
This end did purse my brows and bend my mien  
To a most savage fierceness, and the more  
To quick affright her, bared my sword. But no,  
Nor frowns, nor thund'ring words, nor naked steel  
Did start her from her fixed soul, nor move  
The ruddy color of her cheek. Indeed,  
A marv'lous woman.

*Enter* WALLON and MAXIMILIAN.

MAX. How now, Bernard ! Hast  
Thou tamed this fiery dragon ?

BER. Look  
I not a victor ?

WALL. Wonderfully, sir.  
And so she quits her lofty flight ?

RUP. Be sure  
She does. She kisses like a maiden green  
In love, and when I ask her name the hour  
To consummate our happiness, she folds  
Her arms, demurely, saying, ' As you please.'  
I shall acquaint you both, sirs, of the day.  
Adieu.

*[Exit Bernard.]*

MAX. A merry gentleman,  
Until this love did turn his brain.

WALL. In all  
Things else a lively sense, in this alone  
A very ass.

MAX. How is the Duke to-day?

WALL. He hourly fails.

MAX. Who hath he named successor?

WALL. None. Rupert must not reign, who then?  
He'll doubtless seize the sceptre, but his  
Infirmity will cause it wither in  
His powerless grasp—

*Enter* LADY CATHERINE.

CATH. What do you here? The Duke  
Is needing counsel in his last estate.

WALL. (*To Max.*) To him, my friend, and say I'll shortly  
pay

My duty to his Grace. [*Exit Maximilian.*]

CATH. He cannot live  
Beyond the day. Are you prepared to act  
As circumstances need?

WALL. I am.

CATH. Have you  
His sanction to your marriage with Corinna?

WALL. When he was told Corinna's flight to Rupert,  
He wept with childish tears; "My son," he cried,  
"My only blood turned wolfishly against  
"Its source, and fed with hatred where it once  
"Drew love, and now my daughter, she alone  
"My heart enfolded fondly to itself,  
"Proves traitor too!" I then related him  
The circumstance of last night's work, and asked  
Her hand. He eagerly consented. Nay,  
Declared it was his very purpose.

CATH. What then remains but you to marry her?

WALL. Corinna is a fond, romantic chit,  
Crammed high with silly virtues which belong  
To heaven, not to earth. 'Twere fitter they  
Should stay in heaven. There's a subtle strength  
Inlying in her nature, which  
I cannot break. But let me whisper love,  
A thousand scorns shoot arrows from her eyes  
And lips.

CATH. Intrigue must do what force cannot.  
Do thou let her receive a letter—forged—  
From Rupert, setting forth why they should marry—  
Appointing hour—enjoining secrecy;  
Suborn the priest, and then at midnight, thou,  
Mantled and masked, the tapers dim, the hour  
Secure, with many shows of secret haste  
And danger, breathing low the hurried vows,  
Couldst marry her, she thinking thee her Rupert.

WALL. Well planned. It shall be done. But I must to  
The Duke. We'll speak of this again.

CATH. To-night,  
Be sure and consummate the act to-night;  
Delay is dangerous! [*Exeunt separately.*]

SCENE II.—*The Hall of Audience. The Duke seated.*

WALLON, DAMPIERRE, MAXIMILIAN, BERNARD, LADY  
CATHERINE, *Lords, Ladies, Pages, &c., &c.*

WALL. Your Grace, this place is not the one to suit  
Thy heavy breath; some room, dear Sire, whose air  
Is purer, where no rude disturbing sounds  
Destroy thy peace, would better suit thy pain.  
And oh! our griefs. Be pleased to move unto  
Your chamber.

DUKE. No! My state upon my brow,  
My lords in counsel thus around me, I

Await the coming of this mystery.  
Corinna, Wallon, where is she? I loved  
The maid. Her voice should soothe my parting hour.  
Ah, she was very gentle, fair, most fair.

*Enter RUPERT suddenly.*

*All.* Rupert!

RUP. Why pale your cheeks and start  
You so? Why rest your hands upon your hilts,  
And gleam your eyes as tho' your falchions burned  
To bristle 'gainst my breast Nay, be it so,  
And we shall see whose blood will spirt the highest!

WALL. My Lord—

RUP. Count Wallon, I'll not hear you speak.

DUKE. Audacious boy! How dar'st thou here?

RUP. I'm here

For justice, justice to myself and for  
My enemies. I have been wronged, dark wrongs  
That date far back—but, oh, last night the top  
Of wrongs. Corinna, Sire—

WALL. My lord, you heard  
Your father's word, the which I am empowered  
To see enforced. You are exiled, and by  
This coming here defy the law  
And scorn authority. By such an act  
You have cast off his clemency, and may  
Be made to suffer. There's a way to save  
The sternest course—depart at once.

RUP. I'm here

As rock invulnerable, fixed and firm,  
And none shall stir me hence. Do not attempt  
The act, for by all sacred things, I swear  
I'll dye my sword's point in his blood who moves  
To check my will. I have a stern despair  
And fierce vindictiveness which scorn the end—

Indifferent to the death I give or may  
Receive. Molest me not, I charge you, sirs.

DUKE. What would you, boy ?

RUP. I must have audience of  
Your Grace alone.

WALL. Alone ?

RUP. Alone, Count Wallon !

And look you, sir, prevent it not. There's much  
Between us, things the sword must yet decide ;  
Come not athwart my purpose now, for I've  
The will to strike you dead.

DUKE. Give him his way.

These moments are my last, what boots it then  
If this unnatural, disloyal boy  
Hastens the few remaining sands to their end.  
He shall be heard. Go, gentlemen, yield his wish  
So clamorously urged. No ill can come,  
For death will twin both good and ill in one  
Oblivious end.

WALL. Your Grace shall be obeyed.

CATH. (*Aside to Wallon.*) Fear not this storm, 'twill  
blow success.

[*Exeunt all but the Duke and Rupert.*]

DUKE. And now be brief—your business ?

RUP. Am I

No more than this ? The lowest serf might claim  
As much.

DUKE. And traitors less.

RUP. I understand,

But I am past the wounding. Name  
Me as you will. But oh ! when age  
Consents with death to mine the ripened form,  
And doom-like shadows darken o'er thy brow,  
At such a time let angry words be spared.

DUKE. Dost come then to repent ?

RUP. For what I did  
In rage, a keen remorse hath ever filled  
My heart; but I have been too foully wronged  
To beg a pardon where I have some claim  
To find redress.

DUKE. How now! Art here for this?

RUP. Father, I pray you spare hot words. I'm not  
Possessed with all the coolness I should have  
To stand before you, I have memories  
That prick me ever with a fiery spur.  
Oh, rouse them not! I am prepared to yield  
All things a man may yield, and win your love  
Again; so let not discord separate  
Us now.

DUKE. I will not—

RUP. Hear me yet. There is  
In me that hot impetuousness which  
You bear, and which I did receive from you.  
My passions, will and humor, all unswayed  
By discipline, have grown  
Too fondly seated in their waywardness  
To brook controlment now. From childhood all  
The passions of my heart were left to bloom  
And harvest to their full, until I bore  
A wilderness which ran to rot and seed;  
Luxuriant, but poisonous plants, choking out  
All goodly growths and blasting wholesome roots.  
You know my evil, stir it not.

DUKE. Now hear

Me, sir. Your proud and wayward soul that first  
Defied control and spurned at counsel, brought  
On you your suffering. Indignities  
On me inflicted, on my councillors  
And friends imperious will and fitful passion.  
Your nature dead to love, you ceaseless hurled  
The illness of your hate on all alike.

I often heard the wrongs you did, and so  
Resolved to punish.

RUP. Lies! by policy  
Invented—lies to do me wrong and pierce  
The centre of my hope—invented by  
Your friends, those friends for whose preferment you  
Discarded me.

DUKE. Wrong not my friends.

RUP. I do  
Not wrong your friends. I know my nearness to  
Your Grace pleads nothing in my cause; that you  
Believe instead these vile court eringers, who  
Would raise their beards for you to spit upon,  
Or lay their shoulders for a mounting block.  
I tell you, sir, these friends are false to me  
And you.

DUKE. I will not hear them so proclaimed.  
They are my truest friends, who all uphold  
My dignity and do office to  
My state—dear friends, who when my son upraised  
His parricidal arm, did thwart him in  
His hideous purpose.

RUP. Patience, burning heart!  
Oh, patience! Father, as thou prayest to  
Thy God for mercy, taunt me not like this.  
I came to plead for peace. I may not be  
As patient nor as gentle as I should;  
There's too much torment in my breaking heart,  
I would forget and be forgiven, but  
There is a leaping fury in my breast  
Which oh! for love of heaven, stir not so.

DUKE. You must not wrong my friends.

RUP. They wronged me much,  
They brought your son to this.

DUKE. Not so; your own  
Disloyal self alone was guilty.



RUP. Father! I will be calm! You call me guilty!  
I was a fiery youth, proud, stern, and harsh  
To those I knew not well, as closing up  
My gentler self, turned only to the world  
My nightly side, the inner sun-lit nature  
Revealed alone to those whose friendship wooed  
The knowledge. Thus to many seeming cold,  
And to these maggots breeding in the rays  
Of favor, showing bitterness and scorn,  
I won much hatred; but, my father, if  
Thou hadst but smiled, or cast upon my heart  
A little of the love my yearning eyes  
Watched day by day to gain, the frozen wax  
Had melted, taking thy impress of love  
And bearing it forever. But with hope  
And dreams and secret aspirations,  
And new found joy in love of fair Corinna,  
There came a sudden blight that turned my heart  
And all its secret wealth to ashes.

DUKE. What was this?

RUP. A revelation, coming like  
A cloud, which blackened earth and heaven, ne'er  
Again to lift its sable pall—a doom  
Inwritten in my brain with dawn of life,  
Infused e'en with inception, permeating  
Each drop of blood flowing from my mother's veins  
To those of mine. This knowledge newly broke  
Upon my soul—its horrors darkling o'er  
My path—'twas then thou drov'st me from thy presence.  
A grief thou shouldst have soothed, an evil thou  
Bestowed, itself and me were thrust away!  
Oh God! that hour! It seemed as though my brain  
Would burst and scatter to the winds its weight  
Of fire. Injustice heaping agony  
Made up a sum of suffering beyond  
My heart to measure or sustain.

You banished me—two years I wandered forth  
In desolation and dead despair.  
But one fair star still showed me where was heaven ;  
Corinna sweetened memory, made life  
A thing to bear, and hope to soar with wings  
Of love.

DUKE. Corinna !

RUP. But as if no-wrong  
Could pass unthought, last night an army of  
Thy satellites, led by the miscreant Wallon—

DUKE. The miscreant Wallon ! Foul tongued boy !

RUP. These ministers of thy revenging purpose,  
Broke in upon my peace with clamor of  
Pursuit, and dragged by crowd of numbers from  
My very arms, the fair Corinna !  
The monsters were thy shadows, creatures who  
Caught hints from thee and made them laws. They knew  
Thy wish, though darkly uttered, knew thou didst  
Pursue me with a hatred monstrous and  
Unnatural—and so divining what  
Thy wishes were, did act upon them. Thus  
Upheaping wrongs, last night did reach the top  
Beyond endurance. Where is Corinna ?  
Thou shalt not rob me of my only joy.

DUKE. Corinna, Wallon weds. I have so pledged.  
Blaspheming boy, beware ! do not react  
Thy former scene of crime.

RUP. To Wallon wed !  
May universal death fall on our house  
Ere such a thing can be. Thou dost refuse  
Me peace—with unrelenting dagger pierceth  
My dearest hope. Hear me ! Thou art no more  
My father, but my enemy. Look well  
To know as I have known. Be venom stings  
In thee as thou hast stung, and know, oh know,  
In thy last hour, the hopelessness of dark

Despair ; be serpents—— God of heaven ! I know  
Not what I say—This spirit's on me now ! [*Rushes off.*]

DUKE. Rupert ! My son ! [*Sinks back into his chair.*]

His curses ring my knell !

His words were as the wing of death. But I'll

Not yield unto the parricide. Within !

Whatho ! My breath is ebbing ; this I feel

Is Death's ascendant hour. Still give me time

That he may know my power.

*Enter CATHERINE.*

CATH. My liege, how ill

You look. May heaven spare your Grace !

DUKE. The end

Hath come ; this mortal life is rounding off.

Thou only, Catherine, art left to me—

The nearest to my blood.

CATH. Not so ; your son—

DUKE. Not him ! Not him ! How dark the shadow  
grows !

Air, air ! My son, in thee so sadly doomed,

Doth end our house. I will not think of him.

He is a viper eating to my heart !

Hear me, Catherine—he must not reign, his woe

Unfits him—bid the lords attend—I've here

The paper nominating Wallon Duke—

CATH. Sire, cast not off your son—

DUKE. Infirm and weak

He should not reign. Disloyal, false, he shall

Not reign—

CATH. My gracious liege, ah, speak not thus !

Give me the document, in Wallon's hands

A solemn testament from thee (*aside*) the name

Is blank, not yet filled in—(*aloud*) Your Grace, it needs

Your signature.

DUKE. Give me the pen—there is

A mist before my gaze—come guide my hand.

[*Catherine assists him to sign the paper.*]

I trust in thee—my will proclaim—I die—

Attendance bring. O, life and world farewell !

My state and sovereignty lie low ; O power,

Thou art a mockery ! I cannot speak—

Some air.

*Enter Pages and Attendants.*

CATH. Unto his chamber lead him.—(*Aside*) He  
Is speechless. Heaven lock his tongue forever !  
My fate hangs on a moment's fleeting course.

DUKE. I die!--Air ! Air !

CATH. I pray the lords may hold  
Away until 'tis past. (*Aloud*) Conduct him hence.

[*He is led off. Exeunt all but Catherine.*]

works fate so well ! This paper blank, the name  
Unfilled, reposed in me unknown to others,  
Not Wallon's but young Rupert's name shall know !  
And secret held by me till time and place  
Shall make it like an angel's tongue, so plead  
My cause, success will sit upon it. Aye,  
I see the way ! Oh, blessed page, fair sheet,  
Thou art a Delphic scroll to me ; my fate  
Inwritten lies within thy charmed lines.  
By thee he shall be mine—himself, his state,  
His all ! The future breaks—the upward course  
I see ; my plans unfold, all things conspire  
To aid where high ambition points the way.  
Corinna hides the sun no more, this smooth  
And cunning Wallon pliant to my will—

*Enter DAMPIERRE.*

How is the Duke ?

DAMP. His breath is short. The end  
Will come too soon.

CATH. He must not die and I  
Away.

*Enter WALLON.*

Alas ! my lord, your face looks like  
A sorrow.

WALL. Read it so. That royal soul  
To whom we owed a love and reverence,  
Is shrouded now in death's estate.

CATH. Oh, woe !  
(*To Damp.*) Good sir, unto the lords and bear this grief.  
[*Exit Dampierre.*

(*To Wallon.*) What is thy course ?

WALL. I will confront him with  
A charge of his insanity, which by  
All law deprives him of his will.

CATH. Confront  
Him here, surrounded by his vassals and  
Retainers, those in whom his blood and rank  
Inspire a love and reverence, and thou  
Art lost. Away and seek a foreign aid,  
And back thee with the weight an army gives.  
Those superstitious fears abroad, thou canst  
So work, his friends will fall from him as one  
Accursed, and with accord will follow thee,  
Thundering to the sky thy name as Duke.

WALL. That Rupert's mad, and no succession named  
Remains the rock on which I build my hopes.

*Enter RUPERT, speaking.*

My father, father ! What, Count Wallon !  
I came to seek my father, why wilt thou  
Still cross my path ?

WALL. Aye, seek and find him, sir.

CATH. Alas, my lord, thy sire is dead !

RUP. No ! no !

Thou canst not mean—Almighty heaven !  
 He dead and all my curses unrecalled,  
 He dead and I have no forgiveness ! dead !  
 And still his hatred on my soul ! Oh grief !  
 Oh woe !

CATH. Thou art our sovereign now.

WALL. Not so ! Religion, justice, law essays  
 Against the act. Nay, frown not, lord. I will  
 Proclaim that thy infirmity doth bar  
 Succeeding to the crown.

RUP. What means this new  
 Framed insolence ?

WALL. The stings your soaring pride .  
 So oft unsparing thrust into my breast,  
 Prompts now redress. I'll fling abroad the charge  
 That thou wert near to the good Duke's death.

RUP. How !

WALL. Aye sir, a murderer ! An hour ago  
 You met, your sword without the scabbard,  
 And drawn upon the poor old man. We left  
 You thus, and when again we saw the Duke,  
 The damp of death was on his brow, his heart  
 By his ungrateful son so pierced and rent,  
 The life no longer courting of this world,  
 Did gladly 'scape from such remembrances.

RUP. Art mad ? I'll crush thee to the dust.

WALL. I will  
 Proclaim thy crime ! What ho ! Come forth !  
 Good lords and gentlemen, all loyal souls,

*Enter DAMPIERRE, BERNARD, MAXIMILIAN, lords, &c., all  
 enter hurriedly*

Come forth ! all you that grieve, behold  
 The cause ! The murd'rer of the Duke !

All. Rupert !

WALL. The parricide, whose words did wound our sire

To death. Shall he then rule in Altenburg?  
There is no man of you that loved his lord,  
Who'll not defy the rule that plumes upon  
A father's broken life!

RUP. What thing is this?  
There is no truth in thee.

WALL. Dost thou recall  
The sibyl's prophecy?

RUP. (*Starting back.*) Oh God! I do  
Remember! How it comes upon me with  
A breath that withers! No! The words were false  
And meaningless. I shut them from my sense.

WALL. No! let them ever hiss upon thy brain—  
“*When Rupert stains his soul with kindred life,  
His brain shall be with deepest madness rife.*”—

RUP. No more! No more!

WALL. “*And look see the death upon his brow,  
His dying words a murderer's soul avow.*”

RUP. No more!

*Enter MAURICE.*

MAU. Thou traitor! Seize him, gentlemen! He hath  
Pursued our Prince with traitorous designs,  
And even now aspires to grasp the crown!  
Your blades flash upward, gentlemen, and shout  
FOR RUPERT, DUKE!

WALL. Then be it so!  
FOR WALLON, DUKE! To horse! we'll try  
The issue in the field! To horse!

*Wallon and his followers are about rushing forth, when suddenly the centre doors are thrown open, and a procession of Priests, with music, approach, bearing to the chapel the body of the Duke. The Procession moves down between the contending factions while the combatants, with lifted caps and sword points dropped, fall back in picture.*

END OF ACT III.

## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room.*

*Enter CATHERINE and DAMPIERRE.*

CATH. My brother holds in readiness, you say?

DAMP. An hour would bring him in the field. He waits  
Impatiently the time. To Wallon still  
He seems a friend—with promises doth hold  
Him off—in private pleads his great desire  
Your pledges of his service to redeem. Each day  
Declares the next he shall to horse.

CATH. 'Tis well.

The other princes I have named—hast seen  
Them all?

DAMP. All! Each but holds his sword at your  
Command. Some swell the ranks of Wallon, but  
To fall from him whene'er thy cause requires.

CATH. Be sure that loud report of Wallon's purpose  
Be scattered through the land, and reach  
In magnitude of danger Rupert's ears.  
Be silent as a midnight sprite—thy plans  
Securely hold, to none give ear nor tongue.  
Watch close, work well, thy high reward shall jump  
E'en with thy wishes. Leave me now. [*Exit Dampierre.*

I hold

The thread of every plan. Count Wallon in  
The field is backed by numbers large and growing,  
While Rupert's friends, affrighted by the ill  
Which on him sits, wax cold in service. When  
Forsaken, plunged in poverty and loss,  
Destruction on his path, dismay within



His heart, the tottering ruin of his state  
O'erwhelming him, no star, nor hope, nor friend,  
Then I shall ride the storm, and subtly turn  
Its force to waft me into power. O brain,  
Thy cunning tissues weave! I almost grasp  
The great desire—I feel it nearly mine.

*Enter BERNARD.*

What news?

BER. The strangest. Riding in the forest  
This early morn I paused to wet my lips  
At where a cot invited me. Within,  
To my unspeaking wonder, there I saw  
Corinna.

CATH. Corinna!

BER. Faint and sick  
I gathered something of her story.

CATH. Well!  
Thy dreams pursue thy waking hours. Go on.  
Why pause? Tell o'er thy story.

BER. Thus it was.  
Concealed by Wallon in the abbey near,  
Corinna learned or caught a hint  
Of some vile plan to force espousals with  
Count Wallon. Flight by chance was offered her.  
At night she clambered thro' a window, and  
Into the forest fled with timid haste;  
There wandering helpless and alone till morn,  
Some kindly woodmen found her lying on  
The ground, exhausted, almost dying.

CATH. Not married then to Wallon! (*Aside.*) I am  
betrayed.  
This doth endanger all. Some plan! some plan!  
(*Aloud.*) Count Bernard, serve me now, and thou shalt  
crown  
Thy highest wish with quick success.

BER. Thy love—

CATH. My love or else thou claim'st.

BER. I'll serve thee if

It were a challenge to the fiend himself.

Thy love my goal, I'd battle Satan

To win it. Command me, lady.

CATH. I'll acquaint

Thee with the matter presently. Await

Me hence awhile.

BER. Do not be long.

[*Exit Bernard.*]

CATH. Yes, yes,

Conceal'd there, reported dead! A well

Adjusted tale would pass suspicion. Aye,

'Twould serve. Reported dead? If dead in truth—

No, no, I'm not so lost. No blood, no blood!

Ambition, love and hatred, you that beck

Me on, lead not to that!

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—RUPERT *discovered as Duke*, MAURICE, DAM-  
PIERRE *and others.*

RUP. (*Rising and coming down.*) Go each the way his  
pleasure leads him. I

Will walk alone. You, Maurice, stay. (*Walks alone.*)

Each breath

Of air doth seem the bursting of this fear,

And every sudden word the coming of

A retribution in madness. Alas!

Why do I fear? The thing itself knows

Nothing worse than this foreshowing.

But oh, how heavy sits my heart! Why must

I bear this woe? Come hither, Maurice. Thou,

Dear Maurice, friend, art now my only prop.

Thy loving service looks to heaven like

A glory. Ah, when other's fell from me

And my sad state, you joined your fortunes to

My love, and ventured happiness in the

Same stormy sea. But now I pray you, let  
Not grief for me withdraw your purposes  
From where your own exelling claims their close  
Devotion.

MAU. You do me wrong to think I have  
An aim which is not yours. My service to  
Your love is my serenest hope.

RUP. Then serve  
Me as you wish, and be the nearest to  
My councils, closest to my heart and sole  
Usurper of my favor and my love.

MAU. My lord you move me nearly.

RUP. Say not so.  
But tell me, Maurice, of Corinna.  
Hast aught been heard of her? Oh! there  
I'm wounded past redress, past cure. Could I  
But reach thee, Wallon! Fate! reserve that boon  
For me! Let death not come till I revenge  
This mighty wrong.

MAU. We find no trace nor clue.  
The priest has fled. Abducted, so we think,  
He's doubtless now in this arch-rebel's camp.

RUP. In Wallon's camp? Perchance in Wallon's arms!  
Death! Oh, that I could pull down ruin on him!  
Can we not rescue her? Why stand we here?  
Let's fall upon this carrion bird who plumes  
An eagle's flight, disperse his forces, beat  
Him back to the eternal forests of  
The cloud-wrapped North!

MAU. Sire, by what means? Your friends  
Infected by some devilish cunning, fall  
From you, and all are swallowed up in his  
O'ergrowing force. He is but twenty leagues  
Removed, and now with banners, music, gay  
Discourse, and show of prosperous venture,  
Approaches like a victor. We are here

Almost alone. A few heart-royal friends,  
Enough to fill a breach, but scarce enough  
To guard the walls, which tottering stand  
Ready to fall at a victor's blast. Ah, sire,  
Our danger looks most large.

RUP. Are things so dark ?

My father's right and his ancestral name  
I hold and will not yield ingloriously.  
We'll fight unto the last, and when we fall  
Pull down these walls, a blazing sepulchre  
Upon our heads.

BERNARD. (*Within.*)

My Lord Duke, Duke Rupert !

*Enter BERNARD, and CATHERINE behind.*

RUP. Why what is this ?

BER. Your Grace, I know not how  
To speak the dismallest news that mortal ear  
Could know.

RUP. Go on ; speak, sir.

BER. Corinna—

RUP. Corinna ! Stop ! one moment pause. Now speak.

BER. Corinna, sire, abducted by Count Wallon,  
Was carried hence some leagues and placed within  
A convent. There he did intend to force  
Her hand, but as I learn from a poor friar  
I met this morning praying by  
A road-side cross, her fear of Wallon so  
Cast down her gentle nature, prayed upon  
Her virgin heart, wet with incessant tears  
Her fading cheek, that when a sudden word  
Of Wallon's coming fell upon her ears,  
Her grief and terror snapt the tender cord,  
And death with sweet oblivion silenced all  
Her fears. This learned I from the friar who now  
Is wending back. Wallon holds her body.

[*Rupert has gradually sunk into a statue-like apathy.*]

BER. My dearest lord!

DAMP. Your Grace!

CATH. (*Approaching.*) What, not a word!  
I've seen the sculptor's marble look more living.  
There's something terrible in woe so dull  
And breathless.

MAU. Life comes slowly back. My Prince!

RUP. Oh, better, better thus! All human links  
Are sundered now. My poor Corinna! [ *Weeps.*

CATH. Good gentlemen, withdraw awhile, until  
His grief hath sway.

MAU. Come, let us grieve apart,  
For she was fair and pure, and should win tears  
From honesty. [ *Exeunt Maurice and Bernard.*

CATH. My dearest cousin, take  
This woe in lighter grief.

RUP. Her murderer I am,  
And yet, alas! not me, but fate, in whose  
Disposal I am nothing.

CATH. Fate say you?

RUP. 'Tis better thus. I am alone and can  
Withstand what is to come with better grace.  
If she had lived, she would have borne unto  
The farther world a memory of me  
As that which was a fear and terror.  
Ah, cast from heaven's mercy I do know  
No form of prayer—but then I know her good.  
She needs them not. Sometimes I feel a want  
Of prayer—it availeth not.

CATH. My cousin,  
The ill you fear wants confirmation. What  
The sibyl spake is not fulfilled.

RUP. 'Twill come,

CATH. And will you yield despairing and in fear?

RUP. Confronting it as from the fiends of hell,  
Defying to the last. No mortal hence

Shall read a shudder on my brow, or mark  
A touch of tenderness upon my lips.  
I tear off human sympathy, and with  
My mantle wrapping round me like  
A Roman, striding darkly on and on,  
Unbending sink into the gulf upon  
Whose brink I stand.

[*Exit.*]

CATH. 'Tis well! 'Tis very well.  
The dawn begins to glow, and glorious hope  
Is bursting forth effulgent like the day,

*Enter* COUNT ELDORF.

Ah! Eldorf, brother! this is excellent,  
Most opportune.

ELD. I greet you, sister.

CATH. Come you backed with followers?

ELD. They march with slow  
And halting step toward this. I swiftly rode  
Before, disguised you see, believing I  
Should kneel to eall thee, Queen.

CATH. It works! it works!  
Come you to my closet, there I will explain  
Thee much. Fate points the hour upon the dial,  
We must outstretch our hands and grasp it now,  
Or slipping by regain the moment never. [Exeunt.]

SCENE III.—*The Chapel.*

*Enter* BERNARD and CORINNA.

BER. The Duke is dead, and Rupert reigns, but reigns,  
Sweet lady, on the brink of madness.

COR. Strange  
Events, thick coming, wonderful! But why  
Am I forbid to see the Duke? Methinks  
That I could soothe his troubled soul.

BER. A little time and it shall be so, lady.  
Remained concealed until the morrow here.  
In yonder cloister there are rosary  
And rood, where thou canst kneel and pray  
For Rupert's good. Meanwhile, I'll slowly break  
To him the news that thou art here. His mind  
So tottering beneath the weight it bears,  
Must cautiously receive that flood of joy  
Thy safety will create. Withdraw, sweet lady,  
And keep thy silence there.

COR. Oh, heaven speed  
The morrow ! Rupert, may our God now grant  
Thee peace ! [ *Withdraws.*

BER. It was not safe to hold her in  
The forest. Here I've secret brought her, where  
No prying fool can scent or pry. To-night  
She must in darkness be conveyed without  
The bounds of Altenburg, or thrust in some  
Dark convent's living grave, from which her voice  
Can never lift to show our villainy.  
I have a conscience pricking me for this.  
Love was the pay—and yet I marvel why  
My loving Catherine did wish it so.  
'Tis strange ! Ah well ! I'll drown the thought of it  
In steeping wine, and dream of wedding days.

SCENE IV.—*Enter* RUPERT, *with a paper in his hand,*  
*followed by* CATHERINE.

RUP. My father's dying wish ! To join the state  
With thee—to marry thee.

CATH. If, Rupert, thou  
Wast prosperous, secured in greatness, then  
That paper I had never shown to thee—  
I would have burned it. Rupert, when I was  
A child thy youth was like a star to me ;

I knelt afar and bathed my soul within  
Its light, and worshipped it. I thought if I  
Were ever woman formed for love, how such  
A youth should win that love. Thy state did seem  
So high, yet not thy state but thy high nature,  
I did not dare aspire, but secret fed  
A silent passion, hopeless, but oh ! full  
Of its own precious joy.

RUP. Can this be so ?

CATH. Still hear me Rupert. I was by thy father  
In his last moments. He divined the hope  
I bore, and thought to sanction it. Thou hast  
The paper there. You loved your father, Rupert,  
Would fain give some acceding to  
His dying wish—'tis there—precious to you  
And me, but if thy heart cannot respond,  
Oh, tear the words, and scatter them ; I would  
Not murmur ; I would only shrink away  
To solitudes where I might hide the thought  
Which thy bereavement urged me on to speak.  
I'm bold, but in thy grief and suffering,  
My maiden modesty shall not put check  
Upon my speech. I love thee Rupert—  
I ever did.

RUP. To marry thee—

CATH. It was

My girlhood's young dream, Rupert. Once I ceased  
To hope, but now in misery and woe  
I see the idol of my young fancy  
Cast down, in grief, despairing, sad,  
And hope springs up again—not hope alone  
To wed thee, Rupert, but hope that so wed  
I could draw thee from the contemplation of  
An evil more linked in thy fancy than  
Borne out by reason. I do not believe,  
Dear cousin, this strange story prophesied



Of thee. Thy gloomy spirit, pregnant with  
Its own dark humors, colored earth and heaven  
With hues reflected, fed itself and lived  
On fears, prognostications, rage, and grief.  
But once thy heart at peace—its weight of woe  
Removed, thy spirit, like the sun, would burst  
The sable clouds which now obscure its light,  
And shine resplendent through.

RUP. Corinna!

CATH. I speak, my cousin, by thy father's wish;  
But if I did not think to render thee  
A good, I had forever held my peace.  
I have a brother, Rupert--Eldorf; he  
To each request of mine to aid thee in  
Thy cause hath still refused, replying thus:—  
“When thou art Duchess, then a thousand spears  
Shall take the field for thee.” Of others I  
Have names a score who would their blades unsheath  
To see us right; and many, so I think,  
Who now to Wallon hold, would join their swords  
With yours, once knowing of this paper here,  
Which so adjusts succession, treason would  
Abate its point, if once proclaimed. The land  
Contentious, bleeding, torn, demands some thought  
For its distracted state, and those who are  
The helm should sternly guide to general good,  
And not to selfish ends. Thou art the State,  
Above thyself, and solemnly adjured  
By righteous duties vested in thy sceptre,  
The safety of thy fold to guard above, beyond  
Consideration else. This may beseem  
A pleading for my hope. Not so, dear cousin;  
I plead but for the state—if that demands  
Fulfillment of thy father's wish, canst thou  
Be silent, dumb?

RUP. I reck but little what

Is done. All things to me are mockeries.  
It is my father's wish—the state's demand—  
What can there be in marriage that I  
Should shrink from thinking of it—marriage !  
Corinna ! thou, thou shouldst have been my bride !

*Enter DAMPIERRE.*

Your Grace's pardon—an urgent letter.

RUP. From Wallon ?—read it sir.

DAMP. (*Reads.*) “ Your Grace must be assured that the force I have is ample for my purpose. I am supported by the best Princes of the land, and note among my friends your closest kindred. My aim is not levelled at your life, nor furthered in your destruction ; resign, therefore, and, you may depart peacefully—resist, and I shall soon thunder at your gates and stand before your presence ; for we those for whom I speak, are resolved never to acknowledge as Duke, a man by the hand of heaven cursed.

“ WALLON.”

*Enter COUNT ELDORF.*

CATH. My brother—Eldorf ! Rupert, wilt thou not Adopt a means by which thou may'st ensure  
The safety of the state, and punish Wallon ?

RUP. Punish Wallon ! There is no earthly good  
I'd not forego to gain this single end.  
Is not Corinna dead ? I'll marry thee  
My cousin, so my father hath ordained—  
I will obey. Count Eldorf, speak ! art thou  
With me ?

EL. I am.

RUP. Then let the chapel be  
Prepared for instant ceremonial.  
I'll marry thee to-night—the morrow may  
Not come. And then to horse. Upon  
The altar we will buckle on our spurs.

And now come forth my sword ; thou breathest hope  
That mid the battle's rage, as ring thy strokes  
Upon the mailed breasts of foes,  
Thine owner's soul may cheat this destiny.  
Come thou, O Death ! amid the roar and strife,  
The shock of spear and lance, whilst blood and wild  
Excitement purges out this fear—  
Come then, thou Death, when glorious honor is  
In gory letters written on my blade,  
And I'll embrace and bless thee as a thing  
Of loveliness.

END OF ACT IV.

## ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in the Castle.**Enter MAURICE and DAMPIERRE.*

MAU. Did you remark the bearing of the Duke?

DAMP. I did, and wondered.

MAU. It was very strange.

He seemed abstracted, careless as to what  
Was passing round, no eye, nor tongue for priest  
Or bride. The ceremonial of the time,  
Resounding music pealing through the dome,  
Melodious chants, and loud-breathed plaudits, with  
Bestowing of the bride, and bathing of  
The waters sanctified, he noted not.  
His eye was motionless, and in a kind  
Of vacancy was fixed. He never spoke,  
Nor smiled, nor answered with a look the cheers  
And blessings that did follow him; but once  
I marked a shudder seemed thro' all his frame  
To run, which ended in a sigh.

DAMP. He seemed  
Impatient for the ending of the scene.  
I feared he would break thro' the merriment  
With some ungoverned passion. (*Music within.*) Hark!  
The sound  
Of Music. Come, they leave the chapel; let  
Us meet them.

[*Exeunt.*

*Enter* BERNARD.

BER. I marvel what I am.  
An ass 'tis clear, but something worse if I  
Do bear this usage tamely. I could beat  
Myself for being so played upon—so used !  
Why, now with oaths, love pledges, vows, sighs  
Have I made protestations of my love  
For six months' past, and she without a word  
Or look bestows her hand upon another.  
Indeed a mole-blind fool—an ass of asses !  
A very screen, she used my love to hide  
Her aim on Rupert's hand. O fool ! O fool !  
And then I played the villain, too, to win  
Her smiles, and plied the Duke with lies of fair  
Corinna's death ! In truth a villain ! Ha !  
Corinna's death ! By all good things ! I have  
Her now. Corinna lies concealed within  
The castle—wherefore not confront the Duke  
With her pale presence ? show him with a look  
The height and depth of his disgrace and wrong ?  
Enraged to find himself so tricked and fooled  
He would some fierce and sudden punishment  
Inflict, and *his* revenge would still be mine.  
I'm not so tame a fool but I can sting,  
My lady ! Look to see how fools can pull  
Down wisdom ! Aye, at once ! ere purpose cools,  
I'll set this bridal tune to discord.

SCENE II.—*Another Room in the Castle—Part dark.*

*Enter* RUPERT.

RUP. I have escaped from them. Their plaudits  
stabbed—  
The air stifled me. I know not what I've done.

A groom ! The fiends possessed me when 'twas done—  
My brow so burns—some air !

[*Throws open the casement.*]

The night is calm,  
The stars—I cannot look upon them now,  
So sorrowfully they bend their gaze.  
Eyes of Eternity, forever fixed  
On mortal actions, by whose light records  
Are made of us, O, sorrow not on me !  
Each star upon the scroll doth seem possessed  
With an intelligence which plucks from me  
This knowledge, bearing it to sweet Corinna.  
Oh, thou my natal star, where lofty thou  
Dost reign ! star of my birth ! canst thou roll back  
The pall, and show the doom to which I move ?  
Unfold ! unfold ! It is the hour when I  
Would pierce the veil !

*Enter BERNARD and CORINNA.*

COR. Of what you say I know not how to credit,  
And yet would not do you injustice, sir.

BER. 'Tis even so, dear lady.

COR. Ah ! there is  
A wicked magic in my senses,  
Making me believe and hear, and think of things  
That cannot be.

RUP. (*Not seeing them.*) A voice is floating on  
The air as spirits were abroad. If from  
The grave thou speakest, or art a tone from heaven—

COR. Dear Rupert—Prince—

RUP. Almighty heaven ! Heart  
Suspend not yet ! Speak, who art thou ?

COR. Corinna !

RUP. Hath madness come at last, and, oh ! is it  
So sweet a thing ?

BER. Not so, your Highness. Here there stands,

In life and health, Corinna. The story of  
Her death invented was by Lady Catherine,  
To further plans she held on you.

COR. And are  
You married, Rupert?

RUP. Dumbness strike me now!  
I know not what I am, nor yet what is—  
Fool! Fool! O fool! I would I'd fallen 'neath  
The recreant Wallon's sword, or turned against  
My own disloyal breast my stained blade,  
Ere I had cursed myself by being so false.  
If earth hath vengeance, I will find it out!  
I am not false to thee, Corinna! Oh!  
I loved thee with a heart unused to love,  
That poured its might of passion all on one  
Dear object. Let me fold thee to my heart  
Again! It cannot be that thou art lost  
To me! Fair, fair Corinna! Once a hope  
Did dawn upon me that thy love, so much  
Of heaven in its pure, sweet depths, might be  
The instrument of my redemption from  
The curse I bear, it fell so softly on  
My troubled soul; thy smile alone could soothe.  
O God, am I the sport of heaven!

COR. Dear Rupert! We can meet no more. Farewell!  
Alas, how little kind of fate that gave  
Not death in truth, but only death which made  
My life a newer pang. 'Twas death of love,  
Which has no grave, but cypress ever. Thou  
Dost hold me in thy arms which are not thine—  
Unclasp them, Rupert. Prince—thou hast a bride  
Who waits thee!

RUP. No, no! let me hold thee still.  
None other ever pillowed on my breast—  
None shall. Lie here. Ah, God, if merciful,

Now end at once ! This is my bride, come wed  
Us unto death.

BER. It was this Catherine,  
My liege, who moved Count Wallon to his career,  
And urged him to take the field ; who sent into  
The forest those who dragged this lady from  
Thy arms, designing Wallon for her groom  
By forced espousal ; she with craft more like  
A fiend's than woman's, when Corinna's flight  
From Wallon's treachery so nearly crossed  
Her aim, did plan the story of her death.  
Ambition pushed her on to wrong and crime.  
She thought to plunge thee in despair, to cast  
Thee down to helplessness and pending ruin,  
From which her hand alone could lift thee up.  
An army held in readiness ; her friends  
In secret swelling Wallon's ranks. Ah, sire,  
Her craft was far outreaching, subtle, strange.

RUP. O hell of hate, hast thou no fury now !  
Corinna ! Pale she looks ! Corinna, we  
Must part now. Ah ! these kisses are my last !  
Great God, she's dead ! It is but faintness. Sec,  
That curl is stranded on her lips. There is  
No breath to move it. Lead her hence. Convey  
Her to some chamber, lay her on a couch,  
Where naught but heaven and her pillow  
May know her tears. How beautiful ! She moves—  
Quick, lead her home. Let her not wake to know  
The agony of parting. [*She is borne off by Bernard.*  
Am I not

A dreamer ! Mad ! mad ! mad ! There is a fire  
Or madness, something which to frenzy nears,  
Now leaping with a fiery motion through  
My veins. Ye fiends who trifled with this fire  
Beware. It shall not come and I have not



Revenge. Withhold ye ministers of Fate—

[*Looking from the casement.*

Almighty Providence! the star beneath  
Whose sway my soul took birth hath plunged in the  
Abyss, and blackness reigns alone where now  
It radiated! Terrible fears grow  
Upon me, and I shudder at a thought  
Which is nameless, formless. Destiny, is this  
Thine hour? and is this divination of  
My soul a truth? My star forever sunk—  
The prophecy, the prophecy! its dark  
Fulfillment breaks upon me now, and *hers*,  
My bride's, the blood I was predestined in  
My birth to shed. Then come thou Doom, I pull  
This death on others as I fail.

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A Hall in the Castle.* CATHERINE as  
*Duchess*, MAURICE, BERNARD, and others.

DUCH. Why doth the Duke absent him from our side?  
Were we less happy in our new-made joy,  
We'd find a care in this.

*Enter DAMPIERRE.*

DAMP. My lady Duchess,  
Count Wallon's at the Eastern Gate, and not  
A moment can elapse ere he will be  
Within our walls.

DUCH. And Eldorf, where is he?

DAMP. I see his dusky columns through the gloom  
Of night, approaching from the west.

DUCH. 'Tis well.

Throw ope the gates, and let Count Wallon in.

Send speedy horses to the west, and urge

My brother's swift approach.

[*Exit Dampierre.*

Can any tell

Me where his Highness is? 'Tis strange.  
The State demands him here. I marvel why  
He hath forsaken us.

*Enter WALLON, COUNT OF AYMAR, MAXIMILIAN, and others.*

WALL. Where is Rupert?  
He is my prisoner. His lands, his castles  
By me possessed—

DUCH. Hold, Wallon. I am  
The Duchess.

WALL. Duchess? Thou? I understand  
Not this.

DUCH. Attend, and let thy knee be bent  
To us. To thee and to thy followers  
I speak. By the late Duke's attesting voice,  
I hold the nomination which enjoins  
His son's succeeding, but conditioned thus—  
His state and rank to share with me. This hath  
Been done, and I am Duchess. Therefore let  
Thy service bow to thy late sovereign's will.  
The ill thou fear'st in Rupert's blood, at best  
An idle fear, weighs not, when by his side  
In equal rank is one of no such taint  
Accused. Behold the Ducal seal (*showing the paper*)

Respect

It, sirs, I charge you, or as traitors shall  
I brand you.

WALL. Thou hast done deep wrong to me—  
Betrayed me. Now I see thy cunning, how  
Thou usedst me to thy purpose. I'll not yield.  
This castle do I hold. Ten thousand tongues  
Proclaim me Duke. I'll seize the state—

*Enter COUNT ELDORF.*

ELD. Not so,  
Count Wallon.

WALL. Thou my enemy—betrayed  
On every hand!

ELD. On ev'ry hand surrounded.  
Count Aymar, there—

AYM. Our cause of grief removed,  
Our Duke and Duchess reigning by command,  
By heaven's countenance and blessing graced,  
I sheathe my sword again and lay it at  
My lady's feet.

WALL. Thou Aymar! Oh, traitors all!

ELD. My followers surround thee, Wallon.  
Full half thy troops fling up their blades and cry  
For Catherine, Duchess.

WALL. Then, my sword, be thou  
My friend. I'll carve my way back to my troop  
And there with bloody arm achieve a crown,  
Or find a grave.

*[Rushes through the group and exit.]*

DUCH. Some follow and secure  
Him. Prisoner to the state, respect  
Him so. Withdraw the rest. Stay, Bernard.

*[Exeunt all but Duchess, Bernard and women in waiting.]*

BER. I know your state forbids my tongue, but have  
I not been cheated, tricked? Thou art forsworn.

DUCH. Have patience, Bernard.

*(Aside.)* This fellow knows

Too much; he must be bought, or—*(Aloud.)* Bernard,  
hear

Me speak. Thy rage is foolish. I am not  
Forsworn to thee. 'Tis greatness that I wed,  
Who'll check me where I'd love? The bounty which  
My passion gives is boundless; that my state  
Bestows, unwilling sacrifice. How blind  
Thou art! Must priestly hands forever wait  
On love, and passion which is freeborn  
Be checked, bound by a ring, a toy like this?

BER. I'll not be cozzened more by thee. The Duke  
Doth know Corinna lives—they've met.

DUCH. Ah ! is

It so ?

BER. She bides within these halls, and he,  
Enraged and frantic swears his vengeance.

DUCH. What ?

Corinna here ? Beneath this roof ? You brought  
Them then together. In the Castle ? Where ?  
I charge you, where ?

BER. Within a chamber lies,  
Secure from thee.

DUCH. Which chamber ? Tell me, sir ;  
The Eastern or the Western ? Red or Blue ?  
The Blue, I see it in thine eye. Thou fool,  
To play with me. Thy soul is glass. I read  
It through. Dare bring Corinna here ! I'll have  
Thee cut to pieces. I am Duchess, fear  
My power.

*Enter DAMPIERRE.*

DAMP. Your Highness, save yourself, retire  
And lock you in your chamber. Rupert, mad,  
His dagger drawn, and frantic words upon  
His lips, is seeking you in every spot.  
Believe me there is danger.

DUCH. Am I not  
The Duchess ? Come to me with these reports ?  
Why, if our life be threatened, where's thy guard ?

DAMP. We thought it policy that you avoid  
This danger, seeming not to know it.

DUCH. By locking in our chamber ? Be it so.  
I thank you for your caution and will be  
Advised.

*[Exeunt Dampierre and Bernard.*  
And roars the storm so high ? This comes

Of weakness. Had I not assumed, but caused  
Corinna's death. Corinna? (*A pause.*) Corinna!  
Come hither, Marie.

MARIE *approaches.*

To the Duke and say  
His Duchess waits him in the Blue-chamber.

MARIE. Not thine?

DUCH. Not mine upon thy life! The Blue—  
You mark, the Blue! [*Exit, followed by her women.*]

SCENE IV.—*Another part of the Castle.*

*Enter* RUPERT.

RUP. Spirits are in the air and some do cry  
Out murder—others retribution. Blood  
Alone can damp this fire. Oh, cunning fiend!  
Oh, false-tongued, damned, damned wench! She shall  
Not live to plume her glory from my ruin.  
O, Doom, come not till I have struck this blow,  
Then Death enshroud the world in endless night!

*Enter* MARIE.

My lady Duchess, sire, in the Blue-chamber  
Awaits your Highness' pleasure.

RUP. A groom,  
And bid to lovers' feasts! These arms shall robe  
Her delicately. A bridegroom decked  
For love and dalliance, kisses on his lips,  
And sighs within his breast, as hotly leaps  
His eager blood to greet his maid's embrace!  
Look I not thus? Go tell thy lady I  
Am thus. Go. [*Exit Marie.*]

Summoned to a bridal bed  
And no Corinna there! Oh, death to all  
Its joy! Why, Death, then end the damned scene.

My steel shall pluck her kisses; round the form  
 For Hymen's pleasures robed, let serpents wreathe  
 In Death's dark bridal sleep, and fatten on  
 The lips designed for me. My bride! my bride!  
 Thy bridegroom, Death, doth come to hug thee in  
 His awful bed.

[*Exit.*

*Enter MAURICE and DAMPIERRE.*

MAU. How stand our matters now?  
 Count Wallon reached his troops unhurt, I hear.

DAMP. The factions both lie on their arms until  
 The grey of dawn. Our gates are closed. The night  
 Will pass in quiet, but no sooner shall  
 The day come mounting up the eastern sky,  
 Than trump and charge will wake the silence.

MAU. There is an awful stillness hanging in  
 The air that fills me with a dread. My heart  
 Sinks low, foreboding terrible  
 Enactments. Rupert's star, which often he  
 Hath pointed me, is vanished from the sky.  
 What evil this can mean I dare not think.  
 Where is the Duke? Was that a cry?

DAMP. I thought  
 It so.

MAU. Come follow me. Hark! again! This way.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*A Part of the Castle. Partially Dark.*

*Enter CATHERINE.*

My steps instinctive follow his. Remorse doth shako  
 My nature. *She* lies curtained in her chamber.  
 I crept and listened in the darkness. He  
 Will strike, not knowing where his dagger falls,  
 And Murder, flapping its dark wing, will sit

Upon my soul forever. God!

[*Rupert bursts suddenly in, his manner greatly terrified, and a bloody dagger in his hand.*

RUP. The world  
Falls from me. I am cleaving space.

CATH. Alas!

RUP. My senses, sight, heart, all are only blood.  
It surges dark and heavily beneath  
My hand, it bubbles up a hissing stream.  
I struck a sleeping form, a voice did seem  
To issue from the wound that was not *hers*!  
But like, ah, like Corinna's! Then there burst  
On my affrighted brain a thought so full  
Of horror.—God! O, God!

CATH. My soul is sick  
With terror. Ah, my mad ambition raised  
This storm. What fiend did urge me on to this!

*Enter MAURICE and DAMPIERRE.*

MAU. That cry pealed from a terror-stricken heart.  
Your Highness! Heaven, what is this? And you,  
Our Lady, too.

RUP. (*Not seeing them.*) Whose blood imbues my steel?  
The air is full of barbed tongues; around  
A thousand demons shriek Corinna's name.  
Mad! mad!

What devil crosses here? [*Seeing the Duchess.*

MAU. Oh! this  
Is what we all have feared. He's mad! Alas!  
That I should live to see it,

RUP. Speak! is this  
A vision or reality? If not  
A fantasy, then earth and heaven cease.  
Oh, tell me what I am? What blood is on  
My steel, and thou unhurt! What murder on  
My soul, and thou still living? Oh, if what

I fear be true, let good and evil each  
 Confound, the world suspend its course, the stars  
 In horror veil their faces, sun and moon  
 Refuse to shine. Speak, but to save or damn  
 Me! Can I bear this fear? Corinna!

Corinna! [*Rushes off through centre way.*]

MAU. I do not understand all this.

CATH. The motion of my heart is checked.

*Enter BERNARD, hastily.*

BER. To arms!

Count Wallon followed by a score of knights  
 Hath secret scaled the walls, and even now  
 Is in the castle.

MAU. Nothing now doth nerve  
 Us to defence. The Duke is mad. But this  
 Is Wallon's last and desperate throw. You haste  
 And signal Eldorf from the walls. Meanwhile  
 We'll gather in some place of 'vantage, where  
 We'll hold him, point to point, till you come up.

[*Exit Bernard.*]

RUP. (*Within.*) Woe! Woe!

*Enter RUPERT bearing the body of CORINNA.*

Woe! Woe! All light to darkness turn and blot  
 From time the monstrous evil of the day,  
 For goodness ends in mortal clay, and here  
 Is all that's left of heaven.

DAMP. I am dumb  
 With wonder.

MAU. Horror and amazement check  
 My grief. The Duchess faints.

DUCH. My brain is seared.  
 Shut out the sight. I die, I die. (*Faints.*)

[*Is borne off by Dampierre.*]



RUP. Oh, have I lived  
To pray to be the thing, so long my dread.  
Come madness now ; strike ! strike me as I kneel !  
Oh, dead ! Come close to my heart and I  
Will pour my life in thee. My senses cheat  
Me with this tale, for death could have no hold  
On thee. Cold ! cold ! I'll warm thee with this fire.

MAU. The fate ordained is now revealed. In this,  
Alas ! we read the sibyl's prophecy.

*Enter WALLON and followers.*

MAU. Abate thy sword, Count Wallon. See ! Wert  
thou  
The cause of this mysterious crime. If so,  
Why let it blast thee.  
WALL. This is horrible.

*Enter DAMPIERRE.*

DAMP. O sire, our duchess, seized with mad despair,  
Hath slain herself. Awakened from her trance,  
She only raved and tore her flesh and hair,  
Until with sudden motion snatched from me  
A dagger, plunging it within her heart.

MAU. I have no power for further grief. All's strange  
Beyond the grasp of thought.

RUP. Oh ! oh ! Can brain  
And heart still bear so much ? They will  
Not break. I would, but cannot join thee, sweet  
Corinna ! Perished flower ! blasted love !  
Oh, can this thing be true ! Thy murderer,  
Forever and forever must my soul  
Still pant to clasp thee e'en as now it does ;  
But never, never can I know thee more.  
Thou art in heaven, I can only from  
The depths of hell stretch up my arms to thee.

*Enter ELDORF and others.*

ELD. Count Wallon, yield! thou art surrounded.

RUP. (*Starting up.*) Wallon! Who speaks of Wallon?

Let me look

Upon him. Oh, thou monstrous evil! Has that sight  
No power to send thee headlong down to hell?  
I've prayed to meet thee. I do know this hour  
To be my last, for prophecy hath said  
It, and my spirit weakens now, but though  
Thou stood'st hemmed in by a thousand spears,  
I'd have the strength to reach thee. Madness nerves  
My arm. Thou art a fiend, and yet I think  
A mortal one. Give way! Give way!

*[Breaks down the guard of those who intervene, strikes  
Wallon dead, but not before he receives a mortal wound  
from him. Rupert falls.]*

His sword

Hath reached me quite. It was a service, did  
He think it. Maurice, I am dying. Reign  
Thou Duke. Now destiny hath done its worst.  
I follow thee, Corinna! Death hath purged  
This frenzy from my soul. Corinna! Let  
My clay with hers be buried. Fare thee well.  
For this I thank thee, heaven.

*[Dies]*

THE END.



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